

Irbid students stage protest

IRBID — (I.T.) Students of the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) on Monday boycotted a company that operates buses between Irbid and the university, which is located near the northern town of Ramtha, in protest against the company's refusal to increase the number of buses. The protest was also against the company's refusal to set up passenger sheds at bus stops and arrange for buses to operate at fixed hours. The students claim that the company had leased most of its buses to the pilgrims who visit Mecca to perform the Umra pilgrimage, leaving only eight buses for the students. They say that the company had gone back to promises to increase the buses to 17 and to operate buses on fixed hours. The students complain that the lack of a sufficient number of buses was responsible for their delay in arriving for classes. The students say that they boycotted the same bus company on earlier occasions hoping that a solution will be found to the problem.

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Two churches mark Easter same day

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Latin and Orthodox churches on the occupied West Bank have for the first time agreed to celebrate Easter — the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ — on the same day, officials said Monday. However, in Jerusalem the Catholics, a community of the Catholic Church, will still follow Rome's lead and hold their ceremonies on April 16, a week before the Orthodox. Ibrahim Qandalaft, who is in charge of Christian affairs for the Palestinian self-rule authority, explained that in the Holy City the Christian communities have to observe the status quo, which has been in force since 1975.

Israel does not kill wounded — Rabin

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin tried to stamp out reports Monday that soldiers were not taking any prisoners with a strongly worded statement that Israel does not finish off enemy wounded. The intervention came after the army announced an investigation into allegations that an Israeli officer died from friendly fire in southern Lebanon in December (see page 7). "We send our soldiers to fight against terrorists. They have to be allowed to open fire if something moves," Mr. Rabin told reporters. "But it is unthinkable that after an engagement, when the outcome is clear, we finish off the wounded. I am not saying there have not been mistakes here and there. And if that is the case now we have to take care of it."

Ekeus to visit Iraq on Sunday

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The head of the U.N.'s Special Commission on Iraqi disarmament (UNSCOM), Rolf Ekeus, will travel to Baghdad on Sunday for consultations, his spokesman said Monday. Mr. Ekeus, who will stay until Feb. 23, will seek to maintain a clear dialogue between the United Nations and Baghdad over the disarmament, spokesman Tim Trevan said. The U.N. commissioner in the last month has visited Washington, London and Paris and he will present his latest report on Iraq before the Security Council after he returns from Baghdad.

Jahan-e-Islam 'insulted Islam'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian authorities have accused a banned Islamic left-wing daily of insulting Islam and printing lies, a newspaper said Monday. Deputy Culture Minister Ezzatollah Zarghani told Resalat newspaper that Jahan-e-Islam, run by the brother of Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had "created doubts, printed untrue stories... and insulted the religious beliefs of the Muslim nation." "The decision to ban the paper was taken in view of numerous such violations in the past," he denied the daily had been banned because it had criticized the government. Jahan-e-Islam, representing Islamic leftists who have steadily been sidelined from power since 1989, was ordered to stop publishing on Thursday after it printed several stories critical of the government.

Romania backs Golan pullback

DAMASCUS (R) — Romania voiced support on Monday to Syria's call for full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and offered Romanian participation in a possible future peacekeeping force to separate Syrian and Israeli troops. Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister Teodor Viorel Melescanu also told Reuters after talks with Syrian leaders he believed the Middle East process was going through a crucial stage and lots of effort was needed to further the negotiations that opened in 1991.

Israel, PLO talk peace, but remain far apart

Washington statement reiterates Arab-Israeli commitment to accords and peace on all tracks

WASHINGTON (Agencies)

Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) have renewed their commitment to peace in Washington, vowing prompt talks on thorny issues like Palestinian elections and Israeli troop redeployments despite escalating tensions at home.

But both Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and a senior aide to PLO leader Yasser Arafat were later quoted by Israeli media as saying the meeting had failed to generate substantial progress.

Mr. Peres said his discussions with senior PLO official Nabil Shaath had been "polemical," while Arafat aide Ahmad Tibi told Israeli Radio the talks "did not bring about any progress" and accused Israel of "suffocating" the Palestinians with its closure of its border with Gaza and the West Bank.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, doing his best to revive the flagging Middle East negotiations, said both sides acknowledged the challenges they faced, but made it "unmistakably clear" that they were committed to a "real partnership with one another and... a real peace."

Israel and Palestinian officials met on the fringes of an Arab-Israeli foreign ministers' meeting opened by President Bill Clinton Sunday, at

Christopher, Kabariti hold talks

WASHINGTON (Petra)

American Secretary of State Warren Christopher on Monday received in Washington Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti, who briefed him on achievements by Jordan in the fields of democratisation, freedom, respect for human rights and the economic reform programme.

Mr. Kabariti outlined the success of Jordan's democratisation process with the participation of all political powers in creating a unique example in the Middle East.

He also dealt with economic difficulties facing Jordan as a result of its compliance with U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq, once the Kingdom's major trading partner.

The foreign minister said despite all difficulties, Jordan chose to make peace with Israel and signed a peace treaty with it.

The minister underlined Jordan's commitment to support the Palestinians and the Palestine National Authority to enable them to regain their rights on their national soil on the basis of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.

He also voiced Jordan's support for Syria and Lebanon in the Middle East

peace process and its backing for them in their pursuit to regain their occupied lands.

Mr. Christopher lauded Jordan's record in fields of democracy and human rights, saying the U.S. administration has officially asked Congress to write off the remainder of Jordanian debts to the U.S. immediately through an annex to the 1995 budget.

Mr. Kabariti also met with his Egyptian counterpart Amr Musa and discussed with him means of coordinating Jordanian-Egyptian stands on the peace process.

which all parties agreed to negotiate promptly all aspects of the interim agreement, including transfer of authority and redeployment in the rest of the West Bank, and elections...

He said in a statement.

The three-hour wider meeting produced an agreement to establish new industrial free-trade zones in the region, and President Clinton said he would clear the way

for exports from those zones to enter the United States duty-free.

A joint communique issued at the end of the meeting said "there can be no real peace in the region without security and stability."

The parties reaffirmed their strong determination to honouring their agreements already concluded and to accelerate negotiations on all tracks," the statement said.

The parties "declared that they are committed to com-

See text of Washington statements on page 7

(Continued on page 7)

JVA to take charge of designing and building dam on Yarmouk

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and Israel on Monday agreed to have the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) to carry out work related to designing and building a dam in the Al Adas, syeh area on the Yarmouk River, the head of the Jordanian side to the Jordanian-Israeli water committee said.

Munther Haddadin also said the Israeli government would pay its share in establishing the dam, which will be used to divert Jordan's and Israel's shares of the Yarmouk River water.

Dr. Haddadin said the committee, which met in the Israeli town of Beasun, discussed designs for the dam which the two sides agreed to build in accordance with the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

The committee also discussed means of storing water

on the River Jordan and adjacent valleys. It was agreed that the Jordanian government will take charge of the project and as such will have to invite representatives of the European Union (EU) to prepare tenders from consultants to conduct feasibility studies. Dr. Haddadin said.

He said a joint Jordanian-Israeli committee would cooperate with the EU through providing the relevant information on the project.

Dr. Haddadin said the EU had expressed readiness to offer Jordan a grant to conduct studies on water projects carried out as part of the peace treaty. He said the EU's desire was expressed following a European tour by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan last November.

The joint Jordanian-Israeli committee also discussed means of pumping water from the Jordan Valley to Jordanian cities for drinking purposes and pumping water from the Israeli pipelines in the north to the King Abdullah Canal in Jordan.

The Ministry of Water and Irrigation is about to offer tender documents on the project.

The committee will next meet in Tiberias in Israel to discuss costs of pumping water from the Tiberias Lake to the King Abdullah Canal. These costs will be shouldered by Jordan alone in implementation of the peace treaty.

The Jordanian negotiating team returned to Amman Monday evening after the conclusion of the seven-hour meeting.

Rabin: Less Israelis back deal with PLO

TEL AVIV (R) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has said that as a result of increased guerrilla violence only 35 per cent of Israelis now support the Israeli-PLO peace process, Mr. Rabin's spokesman said on Sunday.

The prime minister, meeting the visiting Russian deputy foreign minister at the weekend, told him that as a result of terrorism, public support for the peace process had declined from 70 per cent at the time of the signing of the Israeli-PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) accord in September, 1993, to a present level of 35 per cent.

Mr. Rabin's spokesman Oded Ben-Ami said. Opponents of the peace deal have killed scores of Israelis in suicide bombings within the Jewish state since last April, the eve of the implementation of Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Recent public opinion polls have shown Mr. Rabin's popularity sagging, in part because of misgivings over the peace process, but also because of a series of domestic policy blunders.

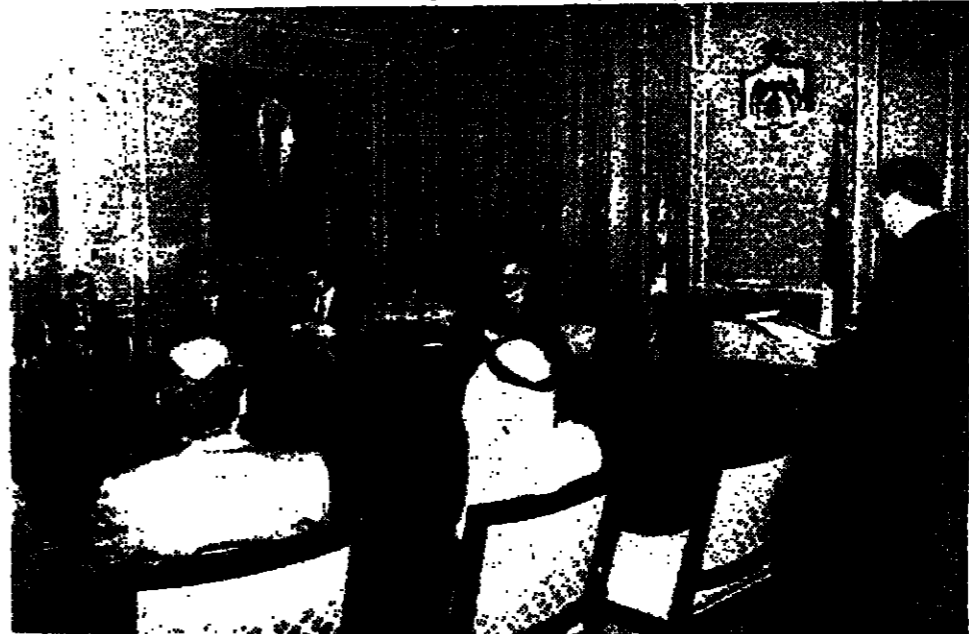
In a move that has proven popular with Israelis but has kept 60,000 Palestinians from sorely-needed jobs in the Jewish state, Mr. Rabin banned Arabs from entering Israel after suicide bombers killed 21 Israelis in an attack last month.

Israel has linked progress in peace talks with the Palestinians to Mr. Arafat's doing more to fight militants who attack Israelis.

Economists estimate Gaza loses \$3 million a day from the closure in remittances from the labourers and exports of local goods. It also aggravates the rate of unemployment which was set at 60 per cent before the closure.

Gaza economist Khaled Abdul Shafi said sealing off the Strip has frightened away private investors.

(Continued on page 7)



His Majesty King Hussein on Monday meets with a delegation representing retired servicemen (Petra photo)

Ex-servicemen appeal to King for assistance

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Monday received the chairman and members of a committee representing the Jordanian Economic and Social Organisation of Retired Servicemen (JESORS).

The committee outlined to the King preparations for the first national conference for retired servicemen and the committee's various tasks.

King Hussein passed his directives to the committee

concerning the JESORS' activities.

The JESORS' chairman, retired Brigadier Aref Oteibe, expressed the servicemen's appreciation of the King's continued care for the interests of retired servicemen.

Brig. Oteibe referred to the economic difficulties facing retired servicemen and said they hoped that the King would help them live a decent life.

He said retired servicemen were living frugally and were appealing to the King for help.

Brig. Oteibe said that through the planned conference retired servicemen were hoping to highlight difficulties and hard economic conditions facing them.

Present at the audience were Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qasem and Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid.

Arab states aim for joint stance on nuclear treaty

CAIRO (Agencies) — Representatives of 14 Arab states will try to reach a joint position on the extension of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) during talks here Tuesday, Arab League Assistant Secretary General Adnan Omran said Monday.

Mr. Omran said the officials, meeting at the Arab League headquarters, would try to outline a draft resolution "defining a joint Arab position" on the NPT extension, to be submitted to the Arab League Council on March 22.

The officials were also to work on a draft convention on eliminating weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, which would be discussed at the council meeting here.

The states participating in Tuesday's talks would include Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon, Mr. Omran said.

Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid said in remarks published on Saturday that "some Arab countries are leaning toward signing without an Israeli commitment to do so."

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak insisted Sunday that Egypt would only sign the NPT extension if Israel did the same.

"All I can say is the day Israel signs (the extension), I will sign," Mr. Mubarak told the Arabic-language daily Al Hayat.

"Let's wait and see what the Israelis do. If they say they are going to sign in three or four years we will put down reservations for three or four years. Then we will sign together," Mr. Mubarak said.

The United States, which provides Cairo with \$2.1 billion in aid annually, has urged Egypt not to link its position to Israel's.

Egypt and the 169 other countries that have signed the treaty are to meet in New York in April to decide whether to extend the treaty for an indefinite or limited period.

Israel, warning that it is still threatened by countries like Iran which are not involved in the Middle East peace negotiations, has refused to sign it and has never acknowledged possessing nuclear weapons.

However, Western experts say the Jewish state has about 200 nuclear warheads.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres declared Monday Israel would not sign the NPT.

Mr. Peres said Egypt pressed the issue on Sunday at a Washington meeting of Arab-Israeli foreign ministers.

"There was a sharp exchange and a harsh exchange but there is no change in Israel's stance," Mr. Peres told Israeli Radio in a Washington interview. "We only said that Egypt has no threat of destruction, Israel does — Iran and Iraq."

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, who pressed the issue, was likely to raise it again when he met U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher on Monday.

Israel and Egypt, partners to a 1979 peace treaty, are the biggest recipients of U.S. aid.

Iran may refuse to sign an indefinite extension of the NPT even if Israel joins. Iran's permanent U.N. envoy Kamal Kharazi warned Monday.

In an interview with the

(Continued on page 7)

Chechenya truce announced

NAZRAN, Russia (Agencies) — Russia and Chechenya have reached an agreement on a ceasefire in the two-month-old war in the breakaway republic, a Defence Ministry spokesman said Monday.

Vladimir Nikanorov said the agreement was reached after five hours of talks between the commander of Russian Interior Ministry troops in Chechenya, Colonel General Anatoly Kulikov, and Aslan Maskhadov, the chief of Chechen forces.

"The parties have reached an agreement to stop fighting with heavy artillery starting tomorrow," Mr. Nikanorov said. He said Russia had also agreed to turn over the bodies of Chechens killed in the conflict.

"The first steps have been made towards achieving mutual understanding," the spokesman added.

Russia sent troops and tanks into the North Caucasus territory of Chechenya on Dec. 11 to crush a bid for independence and became bogged down in heavy fighting which killed hundreds, possibly thousands of people.

The ministry spokesman said the ceasefire agreement was reached between Russia and Chechenya in the presence of Ingush Vice-President Boris Agapov.

He added that the follow-up talks possibly to extend the ceasefire were scheduled for Wednesday and might take place in the Ingush capital of Nazran.

Moscow has repeatedly ruled out talks with rebel Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev, but has said it was ready to talk with field commanders. All previous attempts to set up talks and arrange a ceasefire have failed.

ITAR-TASS news agency

reporting from Nazran and quoting Ingush government sources said that Col. Kulikov, after the talks, had immediately ordered Russian forces to cease using heavy weapons.

Since Col. Kulikov is an Interior Ministry officer it was not clear if he had authority to issue direct orders to the Russian army.

TASS quoted Mr. Maskhadov as saying he was authorised by Mr. Dudayev to lead negotiations "exclusively on military issues."

It was not immediately clear whether Chechen fighters, many of whom fight on their own, would honour a ceasefire agreement. Other ceasefire agreements in December and January collapsed within hours.

The talks were held in the village of Ordzhonikidzevskaya in Ingushetia, 50

(Continued on page 7)



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION: Monday Feb. 13 marked the birthday of Her Royal Highness Princess Alia Bint Al Hussein. Born in Amman, the Princess finished her school in the capital and later in London. She joined the University of Jordan, the English department, from where she graduated in 1972, first among the graduates. Princess Alia is president of the pan-Arab society for Arabian horses and is honorary chairperson of a number of Jordanian clubs and voluntary and charitable societies. Princess Alia is continually involved in efforts to boost women's rights and promote the status of services for Jordanian children.

'Legal changes conducive to economic expansion'

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Tourism and textiles are two major sectors that hold out promises of immediate dividends for Jordan in its efforts to develop its economy and the government needs to remove all restrictions that impede the potential growth of the two sectors, a European economic expert said Monday.

Now that the Middle East region is on the threshold of peace, Jordan and other countries in the area stand to benefit from a European Union (EU) initiative to make a "free trade area" between Cape North and Saliara and the Gibraltar and the Middle East, said Guy van Haeverbeke, a veteran who has served the European Community for more than 30 years.

"There will be Euro-Med flow (of trade and economic cooperation) and there will be a Med-Med flow," he said, adding that such a free trade area offered unlimited opportunities to all sides in an atmosphere of quality-based competition. Speaking to the Jordan Times on the fringes of a seminar — "Jordan and the World" — organised by Economic Perspective, a Jordanian newsletter, Dr. Haeverbeke said he was impressed by the tourism potential in Jordan.

"For millions of people the (Middle East) area is one whole tourist spot rich with attractions," he said, echoing the theme that joint tourism projects for the countries of the region under specific agreements of free travel among them were the best approach to taking advantage of the potential in the sector.

Acknowledging that there was a noticeable increase in the flow of tourism to Jordan in the wake

of the success of the peace process, Mr. Haeverbeke said, however, that the level was "nowhere near the full potential."

In textiles, Dr. Haeverbeke said he did not agree with the argument that Jordan did not have the raw material or the technology to successfully meet the demands of the European market. He said he found quite a good number of people in Jordan who are capable of rising to the challenges of the international market and make a success of local production and exports.

He noted that Jordan and the European Union were on the verge of entering a new trade agreement under which EU member countries would offer preferential treatment to Jordanian goods. The accord, he said, is an area where Jordan could secure favourable terms for its potential textile exports.

The accession of EU member states to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which in essence means barrier-free trade and removal of unfair protective measures, does not contradict the notion of favourable EU treatment for Jordanian products, he said, referring to the possibilities of special arrangements that WTO allows.

In general, he said, the government needs to "create the right legal environment... to gain from the economics of the underlying fabric of peace" and move towards improving local quality control and standards and specifications.

These changes should come in the form of legislation that encourages healthy competition on the basis of quality of products and services and prevents unhealthy practices as protective barriers and dumping. "This is a job for the legislature," he said.



KING RECEIVES CDD DIRECTOR: His Department. Lt. Gen. Ghoul presented Majesty King Hussein received at the King with a set of equipment used by Royal Court Monday Lieutenant General civil defence men in carrying out their Adif Ghoul, director of the Civil Defence tasks, giving details about their use.



Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday takes part in the tree-planting ceremony organised by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (Photo by George Crystal)

Queen plants trees in Yajouz forest

AMMAN — Her Majesty Queen Noor and His Royal Highness Prince Hamzah joined the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) members, nature conservation groups from private and government schools, family and friends on Monday for the annual tree-planting ceremony at the 'Noor Al-Husseini forest in Yajouz.

The Queen, the patron of the RSCN, and Prince Hamzah planted the first eight of the 1,500 to 2,000 cedar and acacia trees to be planted this year in the 400-dunum forest given to the RSCN by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Queen Noor was welcomed by 2,800 school children from 94 nature conservation clubs established by the RSCN. The RSCN has founded 370 nature conservation clubs at government and private schools throughout the Kingdom.

Queen Noor expressed to the school children her pride in their environmental efforts and helped them in planting the trees; she reminded them not to leave the plastic wrapping behind so as not to harm the trees' growth. She commended the RSCN on their efforts to mobilise so many young people to participate in programmes promoting environmental awareness and emphasised the importance of individual responsibility for greening Jordan.

The Noor Al Hussein forest is the sixth planted by the RSCN over the past 10 years in their campaign for "a green Jordan by the year 2000."

Queen Noor was received by Anis Muasher, President of the RSCN, Issa Shaheen, managing director of the RSCN and members of the RSCN.

In a statement at the ceremony, Mr. Muasher said that the six forests planted by RSCN are: King Hussein, Queen Noor, Abdul Hamid Sharaf, Al Muqabeleen, Al Zab and Al Balan, located around the capital.

Mr. Muasher called on all citizens to take responsibility in greening the country through planting as many trees as possible.

He said that with lapse of time the forest will be a natural habitat of flora and fauna of all kinds, thus helping restore a natural balance in the country.

efforts of the Jordanian leadership. He said that the meeting, in which local and non-Jordanian economists are taking part, aims at discussing various aspects of the Jordanian economy, focusing on incentives given to investors and calling on foreign and local investors to launch joint investment projects especially in the peace era.

Also addressing the opening session was Riad Khouri, representing the local company Meba which organised the meeting in cooperation with the JTA. He said that the seminar aimed at focusing attention on Jordan's relations with the outside world in the financial and economic arenas.

Several speakers addressed the audience at the session, discussing Jordan's economic

links with Europe and emphasising the need for bolstering such relationship. They also outlined the privileges offered to investors under a law for promoting investments.

Mr. Khouri also spoke about trade competitions among countries and their benefits for the consumers, stressing the need for producers to continually seek new markets for Jordanian products.

Participants at the meeting are discussing a range of topics related to Jordanian exports, foreign investments in Jordan, the transfer of modern technology to the Kingdom and the environment. Special attention is being focused on Jordan's economic ties with European countries.

Prince Hassan calls for consumer awareness campaign

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan speaking at a meeting in his office Monday with the president and members of the Protection of the Consumers Society from Amman and Irbid, called on the media to promote programmes for spreading awareness among the members of the public of their rights and duties.

Crown Prince Hassan said that awareness could be spread from the mosque pulpit (minbar) through sermons aimed at enlightening the consumers on their responsibilities, on the need to ensure the good quality of the goods they buy and on the merchants' monopoly over certain consumer goods and their abidance by the required specifications.

Prince Hassan's meeting with the society members was

attended by his advisor, Mohammad Saqqaf.

Society President Mohammad Obeidat voiced the society's appreciation of the Prince's concern with the interest of the Jordanian consumers and his pledge to support the society's activities and endeavours.

Following the meeting, Dr. Obeidat said that the society will soon coordinate matters with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs for the sake of guiding the public, through the mosques, on matters concerning consumption prices of commodities and related issues.

He said that the society, which started its services in 1989, was the brainchild of Prince Hassan who continually provides the society board with guidance and advice. The meeting with Prince

Hassan came one day after deputies in Parliament questioned the fitness of imported meat for human consumption.

Deputy Nazih Ammarin, from Karak, had said during Sunday's session that some reports suggested that merchants were importing meat unfit for human consumption during and before the start of the holy month of Ramadan.

Health Minister Arcf Batayneh replied by stressing that the Health Ministry does not allow the entry into the country of food before laboratory tests determine that it is fit for consumption. When proved to be unfit, such meat or other foodstuffs are not allowed to be marketed but are destroyed while the merchants involved in the transaction are put on trial, said the minister.

TCC privatisation enters new phase

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The restructuring of Jordan's telecommunications sector entered a new phase on Monday with the launching of a three-day meeting which will discuss a plan drawn up by an international consultant on commercialising the state-owned Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) ahead of privatisation.

The government announced last year that privatising the TCC was a strategic objective and the process would be launched with transforming the status of the monopoly as a full-fledged commercial entity in the first phase.

It is expected that the actual process of commercialisation of the corporation would begin around mid-1995, after the draft law is formalised through the government and Parliament, while the TCC would carry out the relevant administrative and financial changes within itself to meet with the requirements of a commercial entity.

The commercialisation and privatisation of the TCC comes in line with the government's gradual moves towards a free market economy with limited or no direct state involvement in the sectors such as telecommunications, transport etc.

The private sector has been allowed to enter the telecommunications area after amendments were made to the relevant law, allowing commercial firms to have concessions in "complementary services." Subsequently, private operators secured a concession for radio paging under an accord signed in 1992, and for cellular phones under a deal entered last year.

Several international experts who visited Jordan since 1990 have strongly recommended the privatisation of the TCC and streamlining foreign and local private sector involve-

ment in telecommunications under the close watch of a regulatory body.

The experts, some of whom met with senior government leaders, also pointed out that the long-term gains of the government in privatising telecommunications under controlled conditions would be much more beneficial than the short-term deprivation of revenues from the state-owned TCC. The advantages include timely catching up with advanced technology in the field.

It is estimated that the TCC generated more than JD 120 million in revenues to the treasury in 1994; not an insignificant amount, given that the state budget was JD 1.35 billion.

However, because it was forced to freeze all modernisation and expansion projects for more than four years since 1989, as a result of the economic crisis Jordan faced, the TCC has not been able to meet the growing demand for telephone services in the country.

Under the present form of the relevant law, the TCC retains the monopoly for offering basic services — telephone lines. Announcing the plan to change the status of the law, the government said last year that the corporation would remain to be "one of the operators" in the sector rather than "the sole operator."

It was announced at the outset of Monday's meeting that the concerned authorities have already prepared a draft law on the status of the TCC and the draft would be sent to the government soon for the constitutional process of its enactment.

The meeting, attended by a steering committee chaired by Minister of Posts and Telecommunications Jamal Sarayreh and senior TCC officials directly concerned with the process of commercialisation, is expected to come up with recommendations on the

transformation plan prepared by Britain's Price Waterhouse, an international consultancy firm.

The details of the plan were not immediately available, but the first steps in commercialising the TCC, a state monopoly, are expected to involve changes in the laws that created the corporation and gave it its mandate of meeting Jordan's telecommunications needs.

Addressing the meeting, Mr. Sarayreh noted that Jordanians wanted "to make telecommunications available for all people living in Jordan, whether they are in rural or urban areas, and (that) service should be obtained at fair prices that reflect cost, efficiency and... profit."

In line with this approach, the government's main objective is to "stimulate and support the economic, social and cultural development of Jordan and to improve income generation, whether directly as the owner of the presently dominant operator (TCC), or indirectly, from the stronger and more competitive business of the private sector," said the minister.

The "sectoral restructuring" of telecommunications, as officials describe the process, involves setting up policy department and functions, establishing an independent regulatory body, changing the administrative and financial procedures currently in effect at the TCC, and enactment of the required legal amendments.

Walid Dweik, director-general of the TCC, is the overall head of the "TCC transformation project." Others involved in the project include M. Khasawneh as director-general of the regulatory body, H. Al Jalaby, as head of the sector policy team, M. Hijazi, a financial advisor to the minister of finance, as manager of the privatisation project. Nabulsi and Company is handling the legal aspects of the project.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

PLAY

- ★ Play (in Arabic) entitled "Ye Who Are Hearing" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 9:00 p.m.
- ★ Play (in Arabic) entitled "An Office to Solve the Problems" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

NEWS

- ★ ABC News Highlights and McNeil-Lehrer News Hour at the American Center at 2:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Photo exhibition at the Friends of Archaeology Center.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings under glass entitled "Oriental Roots" by Fatima Rahou at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ "Young America" exhibit (with photographs featuring Americans of all ages) at the American Center.
- ★ Exhibition of works by Qasim Al Samir at the Housing Bank Complex Gallery.
- ★ Book exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre. Also showing another exhibition of Arabic Calligraphy.
- ★ Exhibition of the works of Lebanese artist Amin Al Basha at Darat Al Funun. Also showing works by contemporary Arab artists.
- ★ Educational works depicting the life of "Voltaire" at the French Cultural Centre.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Irshaidat receives EU delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irshaidat met in his office Monday with a delegation from the European Union (EU). Discussion covered the prospect of EU providing assistance to the Kingdom, to enable it to carry out water projects as provided for under the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty. These include the building of dams and the diversion canals in the Jordan Valley region. The EU delegation has promised to finance the feasibility studies and the preparation of plans for these projects. The ministry said that consultancy and feasibility studies will be completed by mid-June.

House meets Wednesday

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament is due to meet Wednesday, in the presence of the Cabinet members, to allow government ministers to reply to queries by deputies on various issues. The House will also debate a report by its Finance Committee which contains two reports submitted by the Audit Bureau.

Jordanian-Palestinian committee convenes

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian-Palestinian committee entrusted with promoting trade between the two countries will hold a meeting at the Ministry of Industry and Trade Tuesday. The meeting, which is in implementation of the Jordanian-Palestinian agreement signed on Jan. 26, is expected to come up with a list of commodities which will be exchanged by the two sides and other fees exempt from customs duty.

133 merchants fined Sunday

AMMAN (Petra) — Ministry of Supply inspection teams Sunday issued fines to 133 merchants in Jordan for violating ministry regulations. A Supply Ministry statement said that 70 of these merchants were in the Amman area. The teams had fined 169 merchants the previous day. The fining of merchants followed a pledge by the minister of supply that the ministry will take drastic actions against violating merchants especially during Ramadan when prices tend to increase unjustifiably.



HOTEL INTER-CONTINENTAL JORDAN

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High stake for Denmark meet

MARCH WILL witness the holding of yet another world conference on par with the World Conference on Human Rights that was held in Vienna in 1993. This time the theme of the international meeting will be social development.

The first question here is whether the proliferation of global gatherings on issues of concern to humanity is the right course in terms of their cost effectiveness. Judging by the experience painfully gained at the Vienna Human Rights Conference, we wonder if assembling high-level officials from all the countries of the world for a week or so is exactly the right way to go about dealing with social, economic or human rights developments. Given the fact that practically all the nations of the world are adequately represented in the United Nations and all its auxiliary bodies, it is doubtful that any activity outside the international organisation itself would be useful enough to justify the added expense or high expectations usually generated by such international fanfares.

We can all be sure that what will be said and decided upon in Copenhagen on social development will be a mere repetition of what has already been said and done elsewhere in international fora. In fact the Vienna experiment on human rights vindicates this prognosis. As happened in the Austrian capital, Copenhagen will most probably experience the same old divisions between the haves and have-nots on how best to promote social development with no real prospect whatsoever to bridge the traditional gaps that exist among members of the international community.

Additionally, the conflicting perspectives on the issue could be accentuated and in the process they could perpetuate the standoff between North and South. This is all the more likely to happen because social development cannot be addressed independently of economic progress and economic concerns cannot be dealt with in isolation from human rights, and so on. It would seem more pragmatic and logical therefore to debate all related issues together instead of attempting to achieve the task piecemeal, as indeed the world tried in Vienna and now projected to do the same in Copenhagen.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

COMMENTING ON the Arab-Israeli meeting in Washington, a columnist in Al Ra'i daily said Monday that without Israel's implementation of the Oslo and Cairo agreements, such meeting would be useless. The Israelis consider the meeting as a coalition against the enemies of peace between the Arabs and Israel, but where is that peace that is worth defending? Asked Mahmoud Rimawi. The real enemies of peace are those who place obstacle in its path and refuse to implement U.N. resolutions which call for the return of Arab lands in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine to their legitimate owners, said the writer. If Israel does not want to return the occupied territories to the Arabs, refuses to implement the Oslo agreement and denies the Palestinians their basic rights, it can by no means hope for peace, continued the writer. It is clear to all parties, including the United States and the world community, that the enemies of peace are those who continue to reject the international legitimacy and fail to honour their commitment, added the writer. Without the attainment of peace on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Palestinian tracks, he said, the concept of comprehensive peace remains out of reach.

A COLUMNIST in Al Dustour lauded the Turkish government for its efforts to reactivate the oil pipeline that carries oil from Iraq to the Turkish shores, and urged Arab states to take the initiative towards ensuring the success of these efforts. Mohammad Kawash said Turkey is to be commended for its quest but it would have been better to hear its government taking steps towards terminating the embargo altogether. The embargo is not justified any more and is in place to serve the interests of 18 million Iraqis, and its allies at the expense of misery of other Islamic and Arab countries, ought to take serious steps towards lifting the sanctions that have caused untold sufferings for the Iraqi people, he continued.

The View from Fourth Circle

Religion, NATO and the lands of chaos

By Rami G. Khouri

IN CASE you missed the news, you should know that late last week the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) declared war — more or less — on Islam. A meeting of NATO ambassadors decided to launch a dialogue with five North African Arab states in order to develop a joint strategy to combat "the security threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism," in the words of the Washington Post report.

This move comes after several years of concern in Europe that political instability and economic stagnation along its southern rim pose a greater threat to Europe in the long term than events in the former Soviet Union. NATO Secretary General Willy Claes told a security conference in Germany last weekend that ever since the cold war ended, "Islamic militancy has emerged as perhaps the single gravest threat to the NATO alliance and to Western security," according to the Washington Post.

Pretty heavy stuff, but also pretty far off the mark. Europe is not worried per se about "political instability," or mass suffering or dying throughout the Mediterranean Basin. What NATO really fears is the Mediterranean Basin — and give them credit for being honest about it — is mass Arab-Islamic emigration to Europe. It is the same fear that prompted the United States to invade Haiti last year.

Since the end of the cold war, we have heard assorted theories and frameworks that seek to give order to the new global political forces. Among the most popular are: That nationalistic warfare based on ethnic and religious identities could become more common throughout the world, and that the predominantly Christian West could find itself in an increasingly grave confrontation with Islam, or the Islamic World, or militant Muslims, or Muslim rage, or something else along those lines that is equally vague and simplistic.

As we witness the gradual fulfilment of this prophecy, we should also be challenged to better come to terms with the real nature of the confrontation that now, in round one, pits NATO against the activist Islamism of the Mediterranean Basin. It is too simplistic and easy to call this a West-Islam conflict, much as this appeals to the intellectual circus-masters in some parts of the United States and Western Europe. The problem that militant Islamism expresses is much deeper, and far older. That greater problem is hinted at but not fully grasped by some in the

West. The Economist magazine in early January said that the only major threats to the West in the near future could come from a stronger Russia, a more hostile China, or if "somebody organises an expansionary Islamic power out of the present chaos between Iran and Morocco."

Well thank you, gov. I feel much better knowing that what ails me is that I am part of "the present chaos between Iran and Morocco." (In fact, the "chaos" extends well beyond Iran and Morocco, especially to regions that Great Britain once colonised, but let's leave that for later). The relevant point is that we are now seeing the cultural, intellectual and geo-political outlines of an increasingly worried and more overtly racist Western perception of events in much of the Arab-Islamic world. That perception believes that our region is a mess, it spawns violence, it threatens European and Western basic security interests, and it has to be dealt with through the political or even military mechanism of NATO.

This is a terrible Western miscalculation and policy mistake that is likely to exacerbate the Middle East's underlying disparities and tensions, and only increase the likelihood of conflict between these two blocs of states. The spectre of NATO governments working closely with Arab-Islamic governments to suppress the indigenous expressions of political Islamism throughout the Mediterranean Basin will succeed no better than, say, the Roman imperial government's attempts to work with local vassals to outlaw Christianity in the first century A.D., or the attempts by the prevailing tribal/commercial regional power structure to quash the spread of Islam in the Hijaz and beyond in the 7th century A.D. When prevailing political-economic orders are not satisfactory to a majority of their people, they have to change in order to promote human equity and social peace, or else they will be changed against their will.

Religions — and especially religions that are pressed into the cause of political and nationalistic activism — are expressions of the deeper needs and discomforts that bring about such change. In our case, in our universe of Arab-Islamic/Middle Eastern chaos, militant Islamism emerged in the 1980s as the most natural, perhaps even the only possible, antidote to a whole range of problems that plagued and still plague our region and our cultures — problems of police states and authoritarianism, of widespread corruption and incompetence in the public sector, of

imposed and largely ineffective Western systems of governance, of increasingly grave economic and resources imbalances, and of a brand of deep social and political alienation that has many cultural, political and economic causes.

We and the West should work together to answer some very simple questions: Why is it that a once grand and productive Arab-Islamic culture has staggered towards the end of the second millennium in such a state of chaos that the world's greatest military alliance sees fit to target it as the most serious global security threat of the early years of the third millennium? Why have our people turned to the comforts of religion, historical memories, and, in some cases, violence as answers to the contemporary problems that trouble them and to the fear of a desperate future that haunts their children?

There are, in fact, reasons for our chaos, and method to our madness. Of course, it is inconvenient for the West to recall that most of the chaotic lands being targeted by NATO today were directly colonised by European powers, often for a hundred years or more. The colonial experience and its transition to post-colonial dependent statehood left us with some horrendous new countries, quite a few nice railway systems, many gigantic bureaucracies, and hundreds of millions of people who now gravitate between chaos and God — between, on the one hand, the reality of brittle political-economic governance systems that are sustained only by larger and larger doses of foreign economic and security assistance, and, on the other hand, the people's collective hope for a better, more human and just future.

It would be a lot more effective, less traumatic and considerably cheaper for NATO — and for we of the chaotic zones — to investigate and eliminate the causes of our chaos, rather than to flail fearfully and childishly at its surface manifestations. This is what the world has done with some intelligence and much composure in Russia, Eastern Europe, Haiti, South Africa and other distressed lands, where it has systematically tried to address the underlying causes of instability. Why does it not do it in our lands? What is it about us and our lands that has made security, rather than justice and decency, our single most important defining criterion during the last two hundred years? Are we animals who must be pacified, or humans who must live in dignity and hope? Now there's something useful for NATO to think about.



Ecuador's fierce resistance surprises Peru in border war

By Monte Hayes
The Associated Press

QUITO — The jungle birds around Condor Mirador, an Ecuadorian military look-out atop a mountain chain on Ecuador's disputed border with Peru, have ceased their chattering. They wait in silence for the next bomb.

This past week Peruvian warplanes rocketed the base repeatedly, peppering the surrounding jungle with bombs that left 32 craters three metres deep and eight metres wide.

But the bombing raids failed to dislodge the Ecuadorian troops dug into the mountaintop. Nor have Peruvian commandos had much success in pushing Ecuadorian forces from three key border posts Peru claims are within its territory.

As the conflict over two nations' jungle border entered its third week, Peru's generals were no longer speaking of an easy victory.

Peru has an army twice the size of Ecuador's and its soldiers have honed their fighting skills in a 15-year war with Maoist guerrillas. But Ecuador has surprised its much bigger neighbour by putting up fierce resistance in the fight over a 77-kilometre portion of unmarked border.

Military experts are now saying Ecuador could bog Peru down in a long grinding standoff that would test the will of both nations to accept mounting casualties.

So far, Peru has had the heaviest losses.

The Peruvians "thought they would finish this off in 10 hours," said Luis Eladio Proano, a civilian consultant to Ecuador's Defence Ministry. "They sent in a first wave with no results. They escalated the conflict and that didn't work. Then they came in with planes, helicopters — absolutely everything — and it had no effect."

Fighting is concentrated in a 100-square-kilometre horseshoe-shaped area at the head waters of the Cenepa River, 350 kilometres southeast of Quito and 1,000 kilometres north of Lima, the Peruvian capital.

The Ecuadorian forces hold the high ground along the river, including the heights of the 2,000-metre Condor Mountain range. From there they fire mortars down on Peruvian troops.

Both Ecuador and Peru are believed to have at least 4,000 soldiers in the river valley and adjacent areas, but fighting is taking place mainly between 40-man patrols armed with machine guns, grenades and mortars. Thick vegetation and broken terrain prevent large troop movements or use of tanks.

Those familiar with the area say it can take three hours to move 1½ kilometres through the dense jungle. The Peruvians are trying to fight their way

up 300-metre hills in 55-degree Celsius (100-degree Fahrenheit) weather. It's a region where mosquitoes and other insect abound.

Ecuador's troops have the advantage of defending familiar territory that has been traditionally controlled by Ecuador. In recent years their jungle battalions have incorporated members of local Indian tribes.

The Peruvian troops are taking losses from mined trails and concealed, Vietnam-style pits containing stakes.

Ecuador also has the advantage of short supply lines. The Ecuadorian army trusts in its ammunition to its rocket launcher batteries at Condor Mirador over a road that runs up the western side of the mountain chain.

Peru must ferry soldiers and supplies by helicopter 140 kilometres up the Cenepa River valley, which is less than 16 kilometres wide at some points. That exposes the aircraft to Ecuadorian shoulder-mounted anti-aircraft missiles.

Ecuador says its troops have shot down four Peruvian helicopters and two warplanes. Peru acknowledges the loss of two helicopters and a Canberra bomber.

Peru is also suffering higher casualties. It says 36 of its soldiers have been killed, 60 have been wounded and another 70 are missing in action. Ecuador says

11 of its soldiers have died and another 28 have been wounded.

The Ecuadorian armed forces appear confident they can hold their defensive positions indefinitely.

Mr. Proano said Peru's generals apparently thought they were going to have as easy a time as in 1981 when they took an Ecuadorian border post in four days of fighting that killed eight Ecuadorian soldiers and one Peruvian soldier.

But since then Ecuador "has really done an excellent job of preparing its people for jungle warfare," he said.

Although Peru's military has at least double the manpower and equipment of Ecuador, much of its armament is old and poorly maintained, says Peruvian experts.

"The counter-insurgency struggle gave them combat experience, but it also took a toll on their equipment," said Fernando Rospiogliosi, a political scientist in Lima who has studied Peru's military.

He noted that Peru's armed forces also suffer from internal divisions and purges of the officer corps by President Alberto Fujimori.

"He has weakened the military command," Mr. Rospiogliosi said. "The people in command positions are there because they are loyal to him, not because they are the most qualified to fight a war."

Italy's Northern League in search of new role

By Richard Waddington
Reuters

MILAN — Northern League leader Umberto Bossi has tightened his grip on the party machine with a vote of confidence, but even his supporters agree Italy's once-rampant federalists are in deep political trouble.

The mercurial Bossi, whose leadership of the party he founded has been under rare attack, won overwhelming backing from a national congress at the weekend to remain at the helm.

But the strong show of support could not hide fears for the future as the party — once Italy's fastest growing — searches for a new political role after dramatically breaking with former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi and his "Freedom Alliance".

Mr. Bossi brought down Mr. Berlusconi after seven turbulent months when he withdrew from the centre-right alliance just before Christmas, accusing the billionaire businessman of being a threat to democracy because of his huge television interests.

The league leader was unrepentant as he addressed the 5,000 cheering supporters and delegates at the three-day national congress that ended Sunday.

"We have broken the siege of 'king' Berlusconi, the Frankenstein of the (political) right," he said. "This country has so many problems but the first was to save it from Berlusconi," he said to ringing applause.

But the decision to topple the government cost Mr. Bossi around one third of the league's members of parliament, most of whom broke away to form a rival federalist group.

He suffered another loss during the congress when his party deputy, former interior minister Roberto Maroni, said he was quitting parliament in protest at the leader's line.

Opinion polls show the break with Mr. Berlusconi, whose government was the first to be elected since the graft scandals buried Italy's traditional parties, will also cost Mr. Bossi votes.

The surveys suggest support for the Northern League, which wants Italy turned into a federalist state to break the power of central government, has slumped to less than half the 8.5 per cent it won across the country in elections last March.

If confirmed in an election, the party would see its representation in both houses of parliament crumble to a handful of seats from the 177 it won in March.

Until the rebels broke away, the league had been the largest single party in the legislature thanks to an electoral accord with Mr. Berlusconi letting its candidates stand for the "Freedom Alliance" across much of the rich north.

"We seem to have taken the wrong turning, down a street with no exit," said a despondent Francesco Tabellini, league leader in the senate (upper house).

Mr. Bossi may have scuttled his arch-enemy Berlusconi but his plan for an alternative parliamentary alliance with opposition parties was thwarted by the rebellion within his own party.

New Prime Minister Lamberto Dini, a former central banker, comfortably won confidence votes, but only because Mr. Berlusconi and his allies in the hard-right national alliance abstained.

Mr. Dini, who presides over a cabinet of non-partisan technocrats, has said he will stand down as soon as he has completed a limited programme of economic and political reform.

This could be as early as June, leaving the embattled league leader with little time to prepare a new political strategy.

Mr. Bossi told delegates he wanted the league to become the hub of a new centrist political alliance independent of Mr. Berlusconi on the right and the former communist Democratic Party of the left (PDS) on the political left.

But critics say the electoral reform that has put a largely first-past-the-post vote in the place of the almost pure proportional electoral system of the past, means Italy is moving towards a two-party system with no middle ground.

"We have to choose, either with the alliance (of Berlusconi) or with the left. (If we remain) alone we are heading for defeat," Mr. Maroni said in his resignation speech to the congress.

But if the unpredictable Mr. Bossi opts to ally himself with the PDS in the coming general election, there are big doubts whether his electorate will follow him.

Bedrock support for the league comes from small businessmen and the self-employed artisans of the rich north for whom the party was an outlet for anger at inefficient and expensive government in Rome. For them, the left means more taxes and more government interference.

"The polls say that if we go with the PDS, our electorate will not follow us," said league parliamentarian Antonio Marano.

Following are the texts on Sunday in Washington, Jordan, Egypt and Israel Liberation Organisation Warren Christopher.

Statement by Secretary Israeli-Palestinian Council Washington, DC.

THIS morning I had a productive meeting with President Peres and Nabil Shaath. Both made it unmistakably clear that Israel and Palestinians — while aware of the challenges they face — are committed to a real partnership with one another in using that partnership to reach real peace. And by reaching that partnership, expressed there can be a turning back and that must find ways to overcome the challenges ahead. The challenges end, they agree towards the end, they agree which I want to report to you. First, both Israelis and Palestinians made clear the determination to fulfill elements of their agreements and to ensure their implementation. Second, both parties expressed understanding of one another's needs and requirements. They also affirmed that fulfilling needs requires a cooperative and inter-related approach.

Philippines suspect w

MANILA (Agencies) — The alleged mastermind behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York was also charged in connection with a blast on a Philippine Airlines flight that killed one person in December, authorities said Monday.

The statement marked the first official confirmation here that Ramzi Yousef, who was arrested in Pakistan and extradited to the United States last week, had been in the Philippines.

Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Recaredo Sarmiento said earlier Monday that the Philippine Airlines (PAL) bombing was a "test run" for other plots here including an attack on Pope John Paul II during his January visit and on U.S. commercial airliners and foreign embassies.

Chief Superintendent Romeo Acop, director of the criminal investigation service, said charges of murder, attempted murder and illegal possession of explosives would be filed against Mr. Yousef and two other unidentified people.

A stewardess aboard the Manila-Cebu-Tokyo PAL flight on Dec. 11 has identified Mr. Yousef as being among the passengers before a bomb went off in mid-air, killing a Japanese businessman and injuring six others, authorities said.

Mr. Acop also said a sample of the suspect's handwriting, taken from an information sheet he filled in when he bought his ticket, had been sent to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for analysis.

Charges were being filed against the others so that police could "secure a war-

Hundreds pro

(Continued)
wounds on his way to hospital.

Israel Radio said he was apparently taking a passenger towards the West Bank Jewish settlement of Maale Adumim, on a main road that also leads to the Palestinian self-rule area of Jericho.

Jerusalem police chief Arye Amit told army radio: "The main direction of investigation at this stage is motive."

Asked if the attack might have been timed to coincide with the anniversary of a Jewish settler's killing of more than 30 Muslim worshippers in Hebron a year ago, Amit said: "It could be that in the end we will reach that conclusion."

Witnesses said the taxi had stopped about 500 metres short of an army checkpoint, just below an Arab village, rocky hillside leading to the village.

Business & Finance

Lull on Beirut foreign exchange market, dealers say

BEIRUT (R) — Dealers reported a continued lull on the Beirut foreign exchange market Monday and said the inflow of capital to Lebanon was slowing.

"There are still no fresh amounts coming in from outside to the market. There are many reasons, political and economic," said Talal Abou Zaki, foreign exchange manager at Bank of Beirut and the Arab Countries.

Newspapers also reported a slowdown on the market and in the movement of capital.

The Beirut French-language daily L'Orient-Le Jour said in its weekly market report that the political situation was making the market hesitant and uncertain despite rising local interest rates.

"All this translates into a contraction of activity following a net slowdown of capital movement towards Lebanon," the newspaper said.

But central bank officials told Reuters there are indications the flow of investment capital is still strong.

A \$30 million balance of payments surplus in December, despite a slowdown in the economy and a political crisis caused by Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri's attempted resignation, showed that capital is still coming in, they said.

"The explanation (for the surplus) is that capital inflow for investment is still strong," a bank official said.

December balance of payments figures are the latest available. January figures will be ready near the end of this month.

Change of mindset most essential for technology-based development in Jordan

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Sweeping changes in the "trade-oriented" attitude of the government and businesses are most essential if Jordan is to benefit from efficient use of technology to develop its economic base, a seminar on the Kingdom's economy heard Monday.

Laith Al Qasem, general manager of Jordan Technology Group, also warned that unless Jordan moved quickly to adapt itself to the requirements of technology-oriented development then the Kingdom would end up as a mere source of skilled and unskilled labour.

Mr. Qasem lamented that the concept of research and development among Jordanian industries was far below the desired level and a majority of Jordanian businesses were reluctant to commit funds to developing own technologies.

Addressing the seminar, entitled "Jordan and the World" and organised by Economic Perspectives, a local newsletter, under the patronage of the Jordan Trade Association, Mr. Qasem cautioned, however, that technology transfer was not the panacea for Jordan's economic advancement.

Technology transfer, if adopted and applied in the proper manner, could help Jordanian businesses, but the approach has to be strategically designed with the objective of using technology to develop own potential rather than be content with the level of foreign knowhow, Mr. Qasem said.

Over the decades, the government and a large segment of the private sector have become "trade-oriented profits rather than technology-based development," he said. Both sides tend to overlook long-term benefits of research and development and favour short-term monetary gains while considering business expansion, he asserted.

Mr. Qasem also cited bureaucracy, shortcoming in the taxation structure, lack of incentives and customs clearance procedures as some of the key obstacles that dissuade research and development among Jordanian industries.

Our people — in the government as well as the private sector — have been used to the trade-oriented mindset for the past 50 years," he said. "This has to change. If it does not change Jordan will end up like some of the Asian countries which send their unskilled and skilled labour outside, with little to show in terms of local technology base."

Mr. Qasem argued that the flow of Arab assistance to Jordan in the 70s and 80s had largely "disassociated the government" from the local economy, acting as a disincentive against focusing on technology development on the local level. This mentality largely explains not only the lack of government encouragement or incentives for local research but also the bureaucratic and procedural problems that a potential researcher faces.

The situation is slowly changing but it is taking its own time. The process of change is not of a level that is required at this stage when Jordan stands in need of innovative approaches and strategies.

The basic principle while studying any aspect of technology transfer, Mr. Qasem told the gathering, should be the realisation and appreciation of the fact that "raw materials are a depletable resource while technology is not."

He noted that the United States, one of the world leaders in industry today, started off with importing products and developing the products with research and technology derived from "reverse process technology" — starting with the product and going back to its production technology and origins.

Mr. Qasem cited Egypt as an example on the other end. The country has been producing the same type and style of Fiat cars for the past 30 years and has not introduced any technological improvement of its own in the vehicle. As a result, Egyptian-made Fiat cars "are useless as an export item," he noted.

In the case of Jordan, Mr. Qasem noted that most of the Kingdom's industries are producing consumer products under licensing agreements with foreign companies so that they have a cost advantage, but are doing little to introduce their own improved products based on own technology.

Mr. Qasem agreed that public sector entities like the Royal Scientific Society and the Higher Council for Science and Technology could help local industries in research and development. But, he said, the level of technology and research facilities available with these bodies has yet to be determined.

London cocoa prices rise on squeeze fears

LONDON (R) — Fears that there might be a shortage of good-quality physical cocoa in March pushed prices higher Monday, traders said.

The March cocoa futures contract rose some £14 (\$21.89) on the London Commodity Exchange to £1,020 (\$1,595) a tonne.

This meant that the March contract was now at a £4 (\$6.36) premium over the benchmark May futures contract from around parity to a premium of £1 (\$1.56) in recent weeks.

Some traders said they suspected a U.S. trade house was buying March contracts aggressively in order to test sentiment.

March has been buoyant since the expiry of the December contract which traded as much as £65 (\$101.7) over the next month because of a lack of tenderable cocoa to meet long futures contracts.

Since then traders have feared that a similar situation might develop when the March contract expires.

Financial Markets
In co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank
U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close 10/12/95	Tel Aviv 12/12/95
Sterling Pound	1.5635	1.5640**
Deutsche Mark	1.5190	1.5185**
Swiss Franc	1.2885	1.2882**
French Franc	5.2585	5.2600**
Japanese Yen	98.90	98.78**
European Currency Unit	1.8420	1.8467**

* Data for 10/12/95
** European Opening @ 10:00 am GMT *** TOKYO 5 GMT

Forward Currency Interest Rates
Date: 12/12/1995

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTH	6 MTH	12 MTH
U.S. Dollar	5.81	6.06	6.37	6.75
Sterling Pound	6.37	6.56	6.81	7.25
Deutsche Mark	4.75	4.81	5.00	5.50
Swiss Franc	8.43	3.48	3.93	4.25
French Franc	5.35	5.55	5.87	6.37
Japanese Yen	2.12	2.17	2.18	2.34
European Currency Unit	5.62	5.86	6.19	6.75

Forward rates for 12 months starting 12/12/95. U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 per contract.

Forward Rates
Date: 12/12/1995

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	378.10	7.55	Silver	4.78	0.710

* Per 100

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin
Date: 12/12/1995

Currency	Buy	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7020	0.7030
Sterling Pound	0.9327	0.9382
Deutsche Mark	0.4604	0.4627
Swiss Franc	0.5458	0.5486
French Franc	0.1330	0.1337
Japanese Yen	0.00701	0.00706
Dutch Guilder	0.0107	0.0108
Swedish Krona	0.0434	0.0436
Italian Lira	0.0434	0.0436
Belgian Franc	0.0434	0.0436

* Per 100

Other Currencies
Date: 12/12/1995

Currency	Buy	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8410	1.8600
Lebanese Lira	0.001965	0.002015
Saudi Riyal	0.1860	0.1875
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3200	2.3650
Qatari Riyal	0.1911	0.1930
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2130
Omani Riyal	1.8070	1.8200
UAE Dirham	0.1980	0.1970
Greek Drachma	0.2725	0.3250
Cypriot Pound	1.4145	1.5150

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Monday.

U.S. \$1.00 costs	1.4022/32	1.5178/88	1.7022/32	1.2806/16	31.24/28	5.2575/25	1612.63/6	98.62/72	7.3975/75	6.6460/10	6.9794/44	\$1.5634/44	\$375.60/375.50
Canadian dollar													
Deutsche marks													
Swiss francs													
French francs													
Italian lire													
Japanese yen													
Swedish crowns													
Norwegian crowns													
Danish crowns													

One sterling \$1.5634/44
One ounce of gold \$375.60/375.50

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN
TELEPHONE: 660170 / 663170

ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MARCH

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	NEW CLOSING PRICE
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	1200	4735	4.260	4.300
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW	1200	4877	4.220	4.250
BANK OF JORDAN	250	888	3.580	3.550
THE HOUSING BANK	1200	7222	6.050	6.000
JORDAN KIBRAH BANK	250	2577	3.200	3.300
JORDAN GULF BANK	2500	3278	1.460	1.450
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	12727	44444	3.780	3.790
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	150	625	4.080	4.100
SEIT KHALIL SAVINGS/INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	800	1565	3.100	3.120
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	14335	19122	1.320	1.320
ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	500	1222	2.400	2.400
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	1500	2718	1.450	1.450
BANKS SECTOR	35027	91444	INDEX NUMBER: 158.33	CHANGE: +0.034
GENERAL ARABIA INSURANCE	604	1174	3.700	3.600
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	1292	2553	3.290	2.450
INSURANCE SECTOR	1654	5127	INDEX NUMBER: 136.57	CHANGE: +0.287
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	10950	16761	1.520	1.530
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	12700	18367	1.450	1.430
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	750	3650	4.750	4.800
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	28100	94306	3.410	3.390
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	250	550	2.160	2.200
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODITY HOTELS	300	722	2.380	2.420
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	2425	8923	3.680	3.690
SERVICES SECTOR	55475	145428	INDEX NUMBER: 131.63	CHANGE: +0.411
JORDAN TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	30	1535	33.000	34.500
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	9169	27259	2.990	2.980
THE ARAB POTASH/NEW	200	1216	6.000	6.080
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	2337	21149	9.450	9.440
JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	4000	32400	7.600	7.600
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	26833	23752	4.470	4.580
SPINNING & WEAVING	4000	40025	2.550	2.580
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRIES	3600	10151	2.800	2.820
DAR AL DANA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	3150	25507	8.020	8.070
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	3500	3435	9.970	9.980
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRIES	1150	7705	6.700	6.700
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	19822	15633	7.80	7.80
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	3300	4571	1.390	1.380
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	350	618	2.450	2.470
JORDAN ROCKET INDUSTRIES	1000	1450	1.400	1.400
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MACH/INCO	250	273	7.60	7.80
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	3500	16934	4.850	4.820
JORDAN SULPHUR-CHEMICALS	350	985	1.720	1.780
ARAB CENTER FOR PETRO. & CHEMICALS	1300	3429	2.600	2.640
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	4250	17818	4.160	4.190
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	18750	39717	2.060	2.110
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	108661	357280	INDEX NUMBER: 124.38	CHANGE: +0.257
GRAND TOTAL	200997	599375	INDEX NUMBER: 142.39	CHANGE: +0.117

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Business Daily Beat
A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Arab Bank employees demand pay raise, more benefits

Substituted a memorandum to the management demanding adjustments to their salaries and other benefits. The demands were presented after the management failed to honour promises it made in 1993 to consider some of these demands in 1994. The memorandum was signed by 1,600 employees out of the 1,900 staff employed by the bank (Al Dustour).

According to sources at the Ministry of Transport, a decision will be taken shortly to amend transportation fares in small cabs, or service cars. The move will be the first step towards revising fares on all public transportation means throughout the Kingdom. Based on a special study, prepared by specialised technical committees, the sources expect that transportation fares in service cabs will be raised by 10 to 30 fils on routes within the Amman area. Fares on routes from Amman to the governorates and nearby cities will be increased by 30 to 50 fils. Service cab fares have not been amended since 1985 when they were slightly increased (Al Rai).

The general assembly of the Unified Company for Organising Land Transport will hold an ordinary meeting on Feb. 26, 1995 to discuss the company's operations during 1994. The balance sheet shows that the JD 5 million capital company earned JD 1.4 million last year and spent JD 535,000 in administrative and general expenses. As such, operating profit, a modest JD 828,200. The company is expected to distribute JD 500,000 in dividends, or 10 per cent (Al Aswaq).

According to statistics issued by the Ministry of Industry and Trade a total of 140 companies with a JD 21.4 million capital were registered at the ministry in December 1994, compared to 163 companies with JD 28.4 million capital in December 1993. The number of companies which were dissolved in December 1994 was 70 with a JD 582,000 in capital. Foreign investments by five companies during the last month of 1994 totalled JD 450,000 (Al Aswaq).

The Cities and Villages Development Bank made a JD3 million profit last year. In 1994, the bank extended JD7.6 million in loans to 80 municipal councils and 36 village councils; 47 per cent of the loans were to open and asphalt roads, 10 per cent for productive projects and 24 per cent for rescheduling instalments and interests that were due. The rest of the loans were spent on buying equipment, constructing public buildings and compensating people for appropriations of their land (Al Rai).

The Tourism Investment Department of the Social Security Corporation plans to expand and modernise its hotels and resthouses this year for a total cost of JD 4.5 million. The department is also conducting technical and economic studies to set up a health spa in the Dead Sea area (Al Rai).

The governor of the Palestinian Monetary Authority said that any move to issue a Palestinian currency in the future will be carried out in consultation and cooperation with Jordan in the first place (Al Rai).

The Jordanian Businessmen Association started preparations for a delegation to visit Spain, France and Denmark between March 28 and April 8, 1995, to enhance business ties with those countries (Al Rai).

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Israel to allow direct election of PNA chief

JERICHO (Agencies) — Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) agreed at their first talks in this self-rule enclave Monday that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) head would be directly elected.

PLO negotiator Saeb Erakat said Israel had given way on the PLO demand, the first partial agreement between the two sides in eight months of talks on delayed Palestinian elections.

Israel had previously insisted that the PNA chairman should be appointed by a self-rule council, which is also to be elected.

But the Palestinians pushed for the direct election of the chairman at the same time as the poll for the autonomy council.

The agreement meant that when Palestinian voters mark their ballots in self-rule elections, they will vote separately for the president and an autonomy council.

The agreement was a nod to Yasser Arafat, who has long sought two separate ballots in autonomy elections: one for the self-rule council and the other for the president of the legislative body.

The title is seen as a symbolic step towards Mr. Arafat's goal of heading an independent state. He was designated "president of Palestine" by PLO bodies in 1988, but the title was not widely accepted abroad.

"I consider this to be a significant step in the right direction," said Dr. Erakat, a minister in the PNA.

The agreement on a key election issue came at a meeting between Dr. Erakat and Yoel Zinger, an Israeli foreign ministry official — the first such negotiation held inside the autonomy area.

Under the Israel-PLO accord, Israel was to have pulled troops out of West Bank cities and cleared the way for elections by last July. However, Israel has resisted moving ahead with a troop withdrawal because of concerns about security in the wake of a series of attacks by militants.

The two sides also agreed that hundreds of observers would be brought to monitor elections — including representatives from Arab countries.

Dr. Erakat said election talks would resume in Cairo on Feb. 21, when the two sides would try to resolve numerous disagreements that remain.

Among the outstanding questions are how many members will be on the council and whether Jerusalem residents will take part in the elections.

The two sides failed to agree Monday on whether militant groups like the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas group, which violently oppose the peace process, should be allowed to run for office.

"The elections are purely Palestinian and if they will be democratic elections, every Palestinian will have the right to participate in them no matter what his beliefs are," Dr. Erakat said.

The Israelis, however, see the participation of militants in the elections as a recipe for disaster in the peace process.

"We want to make sure the elections are democratic," said Mr. Zinger. "But we do not want to see individuals or groups who call for Israel's destruction participate."

Dr. Erakat, Palestinian local government minister, said a general agreement on elections was now in sight.

"There are still some sticking points but we think we'll be able to conclude in a few weeks," he said.

Mr. Zinger agreed that "if we accelerate the work, we'll be able to finish very soon," adding, however, that "sometimes the details take longer time than expected."

But no date has been fixed for the elections. The Palestinians want Israel to redeploy outside Arab areas on the West Bank before the poll takes place, in line with the 1993 declaration of principles on autonomy.

Israel, however, has balked at a troop redeployment, fearing it would leave its 130,000 settlers on the West Bank vulnerable to attack.

King hosts iftar

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein on Monday hosted an iftar at Basman Palace for notables and representatives of various organisations in Madaba Governorate. The banquet was attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, His Royal Highness Prince Hamzah Bin Al Hussein, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shakar, Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qasbi and other senior officials. The King and the guests attended prayers before the banquet (Petra photo)



Sawt Al Shaab suspends publication

By Sae'da Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The board of directors of the Dar Al Shaab Company on Monday decided to suspend the publication of the loss-making Sawt Al Shaab Arabic-language daily with immediate effect but to continue the commercial operations of the company's printing press.

The future of Sawt Al Shaab, Jordan's fourth national daily with a circulation of less than 20,000, will be decided on Feb. 27, when the general assembly — where the government owns a controlling interest — meets to discuss available options.

However, barring a last-minute change of mind on the part of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the company is most likely to be liquidated in line with a decision already taken by the government, which controls 67 per cent of the shares.

Abdul Hai Majali, chairman of the board of directors, who represents the private sector along with three others in the 11-member decision-making body, said a decision would be taken at the Feb. 27 meeting whether to restructure the troubled 12-year-old company or to liquidate it. The salaries and rights of the 180 employees of the firm are assured and protected until a decision is taken, Mr. Majali told the Jordan Times.

A key reason that prompted the suspension was the lack of funds to buy newsprint, a senior official of the company said.

No comment was immediately available from the government. But Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb told the Lower House of Parliament on Sunday that the government was determined to liquidate the company.

The proposal, made in July 1994, was drawn up upon a suggestion by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, according to Mr. Majali. "It came as a surprise to us when the government now decided to liquidate the company," he said.

Mr. Majali said the decision to suspend the publication of the daily was taken unanimously by the board of directors although the private sector and public sector representatives in the board differed on how to solve the problem.

The history of Sawt Al Shaab is very controversial. The newspaper has had 13 chairmen and nine chief editors since its establishment in 1982.

Deputy Tounjan Faisal (Amman), who raised the issue of the newspaper in Parliament on Sunday, accused the government on

(Continued on page 7)

AFM hopes to ease foreign capital rules

AMMAN (R) — The director general of the Amman stock exchange said on Monday he hoped for early approval of a new investment law that will end the need for cabinet approval of stock purchases by a foreigner.

Omayya Touqan said foreign investors who were approved under the existing law continue to show interest in the Amman Financial Market (AFM) but others were awaiting approval of the new law.

"There is a new law for investments which is now at the prime minister's office which does away with the requirement that a non-Jordanian should get permission before buying stocks," Dr. Touqan told a financial conference.

"It is our problem to pass that law in parliament, and I think it will pass, so we have to do that as soon as possible," he said.

Dr. Touqan told Reuters later there was no precise schedule for passing the law but the target was approval before a Middle East economic conference scheduled for Amman at the end of October.

At present foreign investors need approval from the Jordanian cabinet to buy on the local stock market. Bankers said there have been no fresh approvals for months as discussion of the new investment law has proceeded.

Despite the proposed liberalisation, Dr. Touqan said the new law would retain a 49 per cent limit on foreign holdings of Jordanian quoted companies, although he would prefer the removal of all barriers to investment.

Financial experts in Jordan have talked of a strong debate inside the government over allowing foreign investment, which could help a country that has traditionally suffered a balance of payments deficit.

"This is the way to get foreign savings," said Dr. Touqan, whose stock exchange is a government institution. "That's why we don't understand why anybody in the government might be against this."

Despite the obstacles to investment in Jordan and a poor market performance for the past 18 months, Dr. Touqan said foreign investors — mainly representing Western pension funds — remained interested in long-term investment.

Dr. Touqan said the Jordanian-Israeli conflict, finally ended by a peace treaty last October, had been a major obstacle to attracting foreign investment.

"Foreign investment has been almost zero for the past 45 years," he said. "Now, with the peace, that (obstacle) is out of the way."

Talibans threaten Hekmatyar stronghold

KABUL (AFP) — The Taliban militant movement captured three main towns in Logar province Monday, moving closer to Charasayab, the headquarters of Hezbe-Islami chief Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a Defence Ministry official said.

There was, however, no independent confirmation of the spokesman's report.

A Hezbe-Islami spokesman in Islamabad, Mangal Hussain, said fighting was in progress Monday at Baraki Barak, southwest of Pule Alam, capital of Logar province. But he could not confirm or deny the fall of the main city.

A joint force of Taliban and dissident Mujahideen seized control of Pule Alam and the districts of Khoshi and Kolangar from the Hezbe-Islami, Defence Ministry spokesman Abdullah said. Pule Alam is 25 kilometres to the south of Mr. Hekmatyar's headquarters.

Mr. Abdullah said there was still fighting in Tangi Waghjan, a strategic gorge, approximately 15 kilometres away from Charasayab.

The fall of Pule Alam, if confirmed, will be a major setback to Mr. Hekmatyar's party which lost Maidan Shahr, 30 kilometres south of Kabul in Wardak province, to the Taliban last week.

Dissidents from President Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami, Harakat-e-Inqilab of Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi and National Liberation Front for former President Sibghatullah Mujaddidi had joined the Taliban, the spokesman said.

Mr. Rabbani, whose control of the capital is threatened by the new armed movement, has called on the United Nations to speed up peace efforts, a senior official said Monday.

"Since the overall situation and the balance of power is changing fast throughout the country, the U.N. should accelerate its peace process," said the spokesman, Abdul Aziz Murad.

A U.N. official in Islamabad said at the weekend that a "mechanism" for a peaceful transfer of power by Mr. Rabbani would be in place by Feb. 20.

He said the president would stand down by Feb. 22 so a ceasefire in the 30-month-old civil war that has cost more than 30,000 lives could take effect.

Mr. Rabbani's spokesman countered that he was not aware of the Feb. 20 transition date.

Mr. Rabbani's two-year term ended last Dec. 28. The president should, in principle, hand over power to a new body made up of the nine groups that fought the anti-Soviet war up to 1989 and more neutral representatives.

Peres details push to get Rabin to talk to Arafat

TEL AVIV (AP) — Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, in a new book published this week described Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin as "over-suspicious" and says he had to labour for months to convince Mr. Rabin to talk directly to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

In the memoir "Battling For Peace," Mr. Peres claims credit for the ideas that led to the establishment last May of Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

The book appeared in part an attempt to settle scores over Mr. Rabin's 1979 memoirs — scathingly critical of Mr. Peres for allegedly undermining his authority during his first stint as premier in the 1970s.

"Rabin is a man of solid intellectual gifts, but some of us feel he tends to be over-suspicious," Mr. Peres writes, quoting from his 1950s diaries describing the rising army

officer as "hesitant... too cautious, and his personal relationships too bound up in the past."

The book, excerpts from which were published in the daily Haaretz Monday, could rekindle a recently dormant feud between the two leaders who are leading Israel's drive for peace with the Arabs and shared the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Rabin spokesman Oded Ben-Ami and Benny Cohen refused comment on the book.

Mr. Peres served as defence minister in Mr. Rabin's first cabinet in 1974-77, reversing roles in 1984-86 when Mr. Peres headed a government in which their Labour Party shared power with the right-wing Likud.

Mr. Peres unsuccessfully urged Mr. Rabin to drop Israel's boycott of the PLO in August 1992, two months after Labour won elections.

Mr. Rabin continued talks in Washington begun by the previous government of Yitzhak Shamir with a delegation of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. But Mr. Peres wrote the Palestinians were receiving their orders from Mr. Arafat, who, from exile in Tunis, was determined to impede the talks.

"My cabinet colleagues, including the prime minister, believed that the indigenous Palestinian leadership... would gradually gain stature and independence and would be able to negotiate without the close and stifling supervision of the PLO. I believed they were mistaken," Mr. Peres wrote.

In January 1993, Mr. Peres told Mr. Rabin that Israel "must take bold steps towards negotiations with the PLO," he wrote. Mr. Peres then proposed the idea of offering the PLO the squalid Gaza Strip and a small area in the West Bank as an autonomous test-case.

"I suggested that we propose to Arafat and his staff that they move to Gaza (and) represent the Palestinians directly... my criticism of the Washington talks was that we were trying to reach a declaration of principles without any reference to specific territorial issues."

Mr. Peres won approval for low-level talks under the aegis of an academic conference in Oslo, Norway. His ideas, fleshed out in months of secretive negotiations in Oslo, led to the Sept. 13, 1993 Israel-PLO accord and the Gaza-Jericho autonomy in May.

But throughout, Mr. Rabin "moved slowly and warily," Mr. Peres wrote. "He was sceptical of the Oslo talks, sometimes he wholly disbelieved in them." At one point, Mr. Peres wrote, Mr. Rabin confessed that "he doubted anything would come of Oslo."

Egyptian unionists stage protest against unions law

CAIRO (R) — Hundreds of Egyptians, some saying the government pushing them to the abyss, held a sit-in on Monday to protest against a law which could end their control over the professional unions.

Parliament passed the amended law on Sunday, less than one week after a member of parliament first proposed it and riding roughshod over the views of the Islamist-dominated unions. (see page 2).

The amendment to the law gives the judiciary wide powers to supervise union elections, including the right to delegate these powers to policemen and government officials.

"The Egyptian regime is pushing things to the edge of the abyss and we have no alternative but to go to the abyss with them," Doctor Magdi Khalifa told some 500 fundamentalist doctors in the sit-in at their union headquarters.

The amendment was part of a "ferocious campaign launched against the Islamists," he added. "Declaring civil disobedience and strikes are the readiest options we have."

The professional associations are one of the few political platforms in Egypt ac-

cessible to fundamentalists, particularly the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, which has gained control of many of them in recent years.

They compete with the government for public sympathy by providing aid to the poor and unemployed. After an earthquake in 1992, the unions were faster than the state in setting up tents and helping victims.

Even a government newspaper questioned the unexpected haste with which the ruling National Democratic Party drafted the amendment and pushed it through parliament.

"What is the secret behind the government's wish to pass these amendments through parliament with the speed of an express train without stopping at the constitutional stations?" asked Mostafa Amin, founder and columnist at Al Akhbar.

Opposition newspapers kept up their attacks on the government's behaviour.

"The government plants a time-bomb inside the professional unions," said the Islamist newspaper Al Ahrar.

"New escalation in confrontation between the government and unions," said a

(Continued on page 7)

COLUMN

U.K. woman charged with kidnapping baby

RHYL, Wales (AFP) — Authorities charged a 39-year-old woman with kidnapping a new-born baby from a Welsh hospital, police said. The baby girl, named Lydia, was found safe and sound Saturday, a day after being taken from Bodelwyddan Hospital near this north Wales town. Following a telephone tip-off, police said they found the baby Saturday in a house in Rhyl. They arrested a woman and three men who were inside the house. The men were later released without being charged. Lydia, who was born Tuesday, was taken after her mother Christina Owens, 32, was approached in the hospital by a woman she thought was a visitor. Police, backed by volunteers and an air force rescue helicopter, launched a massive search around the hospital and surrounding countryside. The case dominated newspaper headlines in Britain Saturday. It came only two months after former dental nurse Julie Kelley, 22, was given three years' probation for snatching new-born Abbie Humphries from a ward at the Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham, central England, last July. Abbie was recovered just over two weeks later, after a nationwide hunt, at Kelley's home, not far from the hospital.

Pakistan group calls Jackson, Madonna cultural terrorists

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Michael Jackson and Madonna should be tried in Pakistan as terrorists, a religious party official said in response to the capture of a suspect in the World Trade Centre bombing. "Michael Jackson and Madonna are the torchbearers of American society, their cultural and social values," said Nematullah Khan of the Jamaat-e-Islami or Party of Islam. "They are ruining the lives of thousands of Muslims and leading them to destruction, away from their religion, ethics and morality." Ramzi Yousef was arrested last Tuesday at a hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan, and extradited to New York. Mr. Yousef, an Iraqi, is alleged to be the mastermind of the Feb. 26, 1993, World Trade Centre bombing in New York that left six dead and some 1,000 injured. He pleaded innocent Thursday and is scheduled to make another court appearance this week. Mr. Khan, a divisional chief of his party, also called on Britain and Sweden to extradite authors Salman Rushdie and Taslima Nasrin, both accused by fundamentalist Muslims of insulting Islam and threatening with death. "These people have hurt the feelings and religious beliefs of... millions of Muslims all over the world," said Mr. Khan. Jamaat-e-Islami, which is fiercely anti-American, barely manages to win three or four parliamentary seats in elections in Pakistan. However, political leaders are wary of them because of their ability to mobilise public opinion.

Ireland launches manhunt for suspected killer

NAAS, Ireland (AFP) — Using police dogs and a helicopter, Irish authorities launched a manhunt Sunday for the suspected killer of a five-year-old boy. The child was stabbed to death overnight Saturday by a man who entered the boy's home in Naas, 30 kilometres (20 miles) southwest of Dublin.

Modern art show marks re-opening of Uffizi room

FLORENCE, Italy (R) — The works of more than 60 contemporary artists went on display in the Uffizi Gallery to mark the re-opening of a room in the Renaissance Palace that was badly damaged by a bomb in 1993. "Today a sad chapter in the history of the Uffizi has closed," gallery director Anna Maria Petrucci-Toscani told reporters at an inauguration ceremony. The exhibition, entitled "compensation," is being held in the freshly-restored "Royal Mail Room", whose 250-metre long glass roof was blasted to smithereens in the explosion.